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THE CENTURY COMPANY POSTER COMPETITION FOR THEIR MIDSUMMER NUMBER.



LET purists sneer as they will, —and do—at this new school of art that has so recently come among us, yet there is much that is interesting and useful in such a collection as greeted the eye of this exhibit. The discriminating publisher, the art critic, the thorough artist, the would-be illustrator, and the æsthetic art student, found much food for thought and study in this large and varied collection of posters.

When the Century Company issued a call for competition designs for their midsummer number, they had little idea of the present results—seven hundred designs, all original, and of varied degrees of excellence. Of course there is chaff among the wheat, as the designs

represent all grades of effort, from the ambitious, untrained amateur, to the trained artist. And let us note here in this connection that trained artistic ability, even in higher branches, does not always bring about the best results in this art.

Poster work is an art in itself. "What are the qualities that bring about successful poster work?" They are hard to define and difficult to enumerate. Compare them with pictures by the best-known artists. "They are not pictures," you say.

Decidedly not. They are not true to nature, and have none of the characteristics of a picture.

Compare them with the best-known decorative book designs. There is a marked difference. The book ornament may be strong in conception, but at the same time it must have a certain dainty decorative quality, as befits its mission. "May not a poster be dainty?" Surely not. Consider well the most successful efforts in poster work; what do you see? Peculiar qualities all their own; principally breadths of treatment and adaptability of purpose. Strength of character, and good handling of a few colors are also marked features.

"What are the uses of a poster?" Therein lies the vital quality. Impressions and effects are its true mission, to tell its story so that "he who runs may read." To encompass this end the imagination has full play; quaint and impossible conceptions are the natural results, and it is these very impossibilities that form their strongest attractions.

The inability of artists of note in the naturalistic fields of art to grasp these intrinsic qualities is fully illustrated in this exhibition, as several competitors



SECOND PRIZE. MAXFIELD PARRISH,
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

by their judgment in the distribution of prizes, of which we show illustrations on this page. J. C. Leyendecker, whose present address is Paris, secured the first prize of one hundred and twenty-five dollars. It is interesting to note that this young man is an American, now studying abroad, and the example before us is well worthy the first place, although little justice can be done to it in the simple sketch shown. The color is rich and soft in conception, the background of poppies of a brilliant orange red, against which stands the figure in white robe and classical pose. The soft tones of the flesh and robe, and pure solid gold in the flowing hair, bring about a rich and decorative result impossible to appreciate without seeing the original, as the effect of gold is wholly lost in the reproduction.

The second prize is an entirely different conception, but fully as interesting; this was secured by Maxfield Parrish, of Philadelphia, Pa., the amount of the prize being seventy-five dollars. Here we have effective and vigorous treatment. The reclining figure stands out plainly against the green of the grass, and the gray-blue tones of the trees in the background, through which the glimmering light gives brilliancy to the composition. There is no attempt at shading; all is broad and simple in its treatment, but purely decorative, and thoroughly up to poster requirements.

The third prize of fifty dollars goes to Baron Rosenkrantz, of New York; this well deserves third place, from its simplicity of design and vigor of treatment; there are others in the collection that push it closely.



THIRD PRIZE. BARON ROSENKRANTZ,
NEW YORK.